

The Day of Woden by orphan_account

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Summary:

The first day of school like no other. Mr. Clarke is on a sabbatical. No one is expecting the substitute teacher they get. Mike finds himself sitting next to a girl with very short hair, and that same day gets special request from the new teacher.

Mike doesn't realize it, but his life will never be the same.

1. Windy Wendy

Author's Note:

I only have a vague idea where I want to go with this, but I had to start it. So there'll be some angst, mileven, and fluff along the way.

“When I call your name, say present or here.”

This was the first day of school. As usual Mike would keep a low profile. It looked like the whole party was in this class. They had all gotten here early to get the seats they wanted, but this year the desks had been doubled up, so Lucas sat with Max, Dustin sat with Suzie, and Mike sat with some guy with really short hair, almost buzzed. He didn't get a good look at him, but he knew the seating arrangement were for lab partners, so he'd be working with this guy whether he liked it or not.

Mike recognized most of the names that were called out. A few new faces. There was a Kyly McIntyre he didn't know, there was a Jane Hopper, sounded like she was right next to him when she said “here” in a quiet voice, but there was a guy next to him so it was probably just behind him.

Jane Hopper, he wondered if that was any relation to the Chief. There weren't a lot of coincidences in a small town like Hawkins.

Mike didn't know Hopper had a second daughter.

He heard Troy Walsh's name. Great, he was in his class. He would insult everyone in the class before the year was over, he would talk over the teacher all the time. Make fun of her, especially with her name. He already felt sorry for the teacher.

“Michael Wheeler”

“Ha! Frogface is here. And he's sitting next to the weirdo. See that Windy Wendy?”

“I'm not sure what privileges you got away with in previous years, or

even just Mr. Clarke's class. I'm filling in for him with this year while he is on a science sabbatical, and I will not put up with your bullshit."

A low "oooooh" went through the class.

"I'll invite now to leave the room."

"Hear that everyone? Windy Wendy's trying to kick me out of this class."

"I'm sorry Mr. Walsh? Did I stutter? Let me put it in words you might find it easier for you to grasp. Get the fuck out of my class." The teacher gave him a deadly smile.

Miss Wednesday became Mike's favourite teacher at that moment. No surprise that she was a substitute for Mr. Clarke.

Troy mumbled to a giggling class as he walked out.

Mike could hardly believe it. Troy had a habit of walking over teachers and they did nothing. What was it about *this* teacher that made her actually swear at Troy. It wouldn't take long before she got called to the principal's office.

"3, 2, 1..." The teacher said looked at the classroom door. Someone knocked.

"Come on in. Mr. Coleman."

"If you need witnesses, I'm sure a lot of us will help." Dustin said. An agreeable murmur went through the class. She must have been six feet tall with deep red auburn hair. Mike thought she was a knockout, but he didn't stare.

"Can I see you in my office at the end of the day? Miss Wednesday?"

"Of course sir. I'll assume it's about that little shit Walsh? Maybe you should bring in him *and* his parents and I can fill them in on how the year is going to go?"

The principal rolled his eyes, and backed away out of the classroom.

She now had the respect of everyone in the class. Mike couldn't believe what he'd just heard.

Mike took a quick look at the guy beside him to gauge his reaction. But it was a girl, she was smiling. A proud smile if Mike had to describe it.

There was something else that Mike noticed when he first saw that she was a girl.

She was pretty.

Really pretty.

The teacher saw him looking at them when he turned his head back towards the front. She was giving him such an intense gaze that Mike immediately felt uncomfortable. He did *not* want to get on the bad side of this teacher. She was not one to take any bullshit. From anybody.

"Mr. Wheeler, could you stay after class for a few minutes?"

Everyone looked up and around focusing on him.

"Don't worry." The girl said beside him.

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The teacher put a chair in front of her desk for Mike to sit in. She got up to lock the classroom door.

"Um, did I do something wrong Miss Wednesday?"

"No, were you planning to?"

Mike shook his head vigorously.

She frowned, "You're not scared of me are you?"

Mike shook his head again. "After this morning you became my favourite teacher. Nobody has ever talked to Troy like that."

"I think that's the problem. Anyway, we're not here to talk about him. I've heard two things about you that... well, what can I say, they made me smile."

Mike frowned. He had no idea what she was talking about.

"You are the leader of The Party, that includes Dustin, Suzie, Lucas, Max, and Will?"

He didn't know where she was going with this but he nodded his acknowledgment.

"You have a lot of rules?"

"It's just kid stuff Miss Wednesday. I try to keep all the nerds together, that way we all have friends."

Miss Wednesday gave him such a heartwarming smile that Mike was taken off guard.

"Let me tell you Michael, or do you prefer Mike?" Mike nodded. "Let me tell you Mike, Friends Don't Lie, and keeping a promise is not kid stuff. You stick to those rules, and you will be ok."

"Hmpfh, tell Troy that."

"Those are concepts well beyond Troy's reach. Forget about him. He will not be a problem for you this year."

"Um... ok... uh, why would you help me... us... the party?"

"Did you notice the girl sitting beside you?"

"It was hard not to."

"Because of the hair?"

"Well that and.... And..."

"And what Mike?"

Mike couldn't tell the teacher he thought the girl was pretty, for all he knew this was her mother. He felt his face heat up, and there was no way the teacher didn't notice it.

"I see." She smiled back at him. "I'd like for you to promise me something. I know I can't force you or anything like that, but it's a simple promise, and it will make at least three people very happy."

"Ok... If I can, I will."

"That girl is Chief Jim Hopper's adopted daughter, Jane. That's not a secret. The secret is that he applied for funding to help her get into school. I have various disciplines... degrees. And I was sent. About two years ago."

"That's the secret?"

"No, the secret is that we fell in love and married about a year ago. I know his reputation, that sweet girl calmed him down, I fell in love with her too, I'm her adopted mother now."

Mike smiled, "she has a family."

"Yes she does, Mike. But she has no friends. She was home schooled for a few years, enough to get her into Hawkins Middle. She's had no friends, no social integration, but she's smart and headstrong. I can't ask you to be her friend, that's always a subjective thing."

"You don't want me to ask her to be in the Party?"

"I would *love* for you to do that, I know I can't ask."

"Then why me?"

"You are known as one of the nicest people in Hawkins middle. You and your friends. I was..." The teacher looked down frustrated. "I just want her to have a normal life."

"She had a bad childhood?"

"You have no idea. And I can't tell you, Jim, um, Hop told me that needs to stay secret. Even from you Mike. But if you could find it in

your heart to maybe... I don't know... look out for her? I can only do so much at school. And promise to keep this all secret."

"I can definitely promise that."

"Thank you Mike. It will mean a lot to Jim and I."

"You could have asked Dustin, or Suzie or Max..."

"But you are their leader. They respect you and look up to you."

"Are you like a psychologist or something?"

"Or a couple of somethings." She smiled at him.

"Ok, I won't tell, and I'll look out for her."

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Me?" Mike had a hard time processing the request.

"Why do they call me *Windy Wendy*. "

Mike turned such a shade of red that the teacher asked if he was ok.
"Is it that bad?"

"At first I thought it was Troy trying to be clever with your last name. But clever is not in Troy's bag of tricks. Then I thought maybe your first name was Wendy, but Wendy Wednesday... nah, that can't be it."

"My name is Wendy."

"Oh, sorry, Miss Wednesday, I... I um... didn't know."

"It's ok Mike, that takes care of the name part but why *windy*?"

"I thought maybe it was because you talked a lot, you know, wind coming from your mouth and all that. But it was explained to me while Troy was punching me. um, this is kind of embarrassing Miss Wednesday."

"I think I can guess, something about *blowing in the wind* but without

the wind part.”

Mike couldn't look at her, he nodded, kept his head low.

“So if everyone knows that, they can all get a laugh, when he calls me Windy Wendy.”

“I didn't laugh.”

“No you didn't, and neither did Ele, I mean Jane.”

“That's really disrespectful on Troy's part. He's getting worse every year.”

“He's a sociopath, he has all the signs. If his parents get invited to my detention,” she smirked, “I'll lay it out for them in no uncertain terms.”

“I didn't think I'd ever say this, but I think you may be even a cooler teacher than Mr. Clarke.”

“Why thank you Mike, I'll take that as a compliment. Scott and I have been friends since our university days. We feed off each other.”

“You know what Mike? This is completely inappropriate, but you can call me Wendy. In private or if the Party is with you.”

“Isn't that also disrespectful?”

“Except I know you're not. Calling a teacher by their surname is supposed to instill respect, but at college, you usually call professors by their first names. It's a sign that you are maturing. Or some bullshit like that.”

She and Mike burst out laughing at the same time.

This was the first day of school and Mike had a heart to heart with a teacher he never saw before, but now he almost considered a friend.

He wondered if the year would get any stranger.

2. Cool Moms

Mike saw Jane waiting at the lunchroom door. She looked wide-eyed taking deep breaths. It looked like she was about to have a panic attack or at least what he managed a panic attack might look like. He went up to her and said, "You ok?"

"Too many people."

"Yeah, it can be a little scary the first day of school. Do you want to sit with us at the Party table?"

She looked at him for a few seconds and then nodded. "Please don't tell your friends that she's my mom."

"I won't. I promise."

They all sat eating and had been eating their lunches for a few minutes when Dustin, sitting beside Mike said, "So what did Miss Wednesday want to talk to you about."

Mike took a quick glance at Jane, her eyes wide again.

"Nothing. She just wanted to know if Troy was going to be a problem, figured she'd ask one of the kids he insulted."

"He gets worse every year," Dustin said. Lucas nodded.

"We've got to go get our books for next class." Dustin said. "See you in class." Suzie got up with him, so did Max and Lucas.

"Your mom is really cool."

Jane smiled. "Yeah, but she's very protective. If she saw me talking to you I think I'd be grounded for a week."

"You think so? I dunno, she didn't seem like she was that kind of mom."

Jane gave off a big sigh. "I'm never going to be allowed to have a boyfriend. Not that anyone is interested."

“What do you mean?”

She gave him a frank look. “Have you seen my hair, Mike?”

“So. It’s short. I think it’s cute. Why don’t you just let it grow?”

Mike didn’t know what kind of look he got back from her. He didn’t think he’d ever seen anything like it on a girl before. She shook her head.

Jane nonchalantly doodled figure-eights with her finger on the table. “What about your girlfriend? She doesn’t sit with you at lunch.”

“I’m sure if I had a girlfriend she’d sit with me. I don’t think I’m going to have to worry about that this school year.”

Jane frowned, “why not?”

“Have you seen my face, Jane?”

Her big eyes scanned his face, and then she looked *into* his eyes. “You’re cute.” And then she looked down, not able to hold his gaze.

“You and *my* mom can form a club. I think you’ll be the only two members.” But Mike felt a little dizzy.

She giggled. “You don’t have a cool mom?”

“Actually my mom is really cool. She tries too hard to be my friend, but she lets me get away with a lot.”

“I shouldn’t complain about my mom. She loves me, and I love her. I’m lucky. Don’t try to take advantage of her though. You will regret it.”

“I never take advantage of people who are nice to me. That’s a short list in case you didn’t notice.”

Jane smiled and said, “Let’s go to class.”

XXXXX

“Ok, today I’m going to show you a simplified way to get a valid statistical sample, and then you are going to get random samples of plants out in the field.” Miss Wednesday had her deep red hair back in a pony tail.

“I wan get you out in the field.”

Troy again.

“Buh Bye, Troy. You won’t get the explanation how or what to do, but the assignment is still due by the end of the end of the week.”

“What do you mean? Where am I going?” Troy didn’t get it.

“I personally don’t give a shit *where* you go, once you step outside this door.”

Troy didn’t move.

“Do I need to say it again?”

“Say what?” he sneered.

“Get the fuck out of my class. Run to mommy, whatever.”

This time Troy ran out of the class, and they clapped and cheered. If Mike had to guess she was now everyone’s favourite teacher.

“Your mom is a no bullshit kind of girl.”

“So am I Mike.” Jane gave him a sweet smile, but there was something behind it that Mike couldn’t put his finger on.

The teacher had a big bowl of coloured marbles. Red, Blue, Yellow, White, Green. There had to be dozens of each colour in the bowl.

She took out a wide flat scoop like that was dimpled, five rows by five. She scooped in the bowl. Marbles settled in the dimples

"I'm counting how many of each colour I get." She did that a few times. Writing down her results on the chalkboard. Then she took the numbers she had and wrote out a formula. Quickly doing the math in her head.

"Ok, class. Want to see something cool?"

She had everyone's rapt attention. "I'm going to scoop again, I'll get three green, seven white, hmm, let's see four red, and two yellows."

Murmurs of doubt came from the room.

She scooped.

Mike did a quick count before everyone. Three greens, seven white, four red and two yellows.

The students, once doing their own counts were now bug-eyed.

"But how did you...?" That was Max.

"It's called statistics class. There were no elves harmed during this demonstration," she gave a sidelong wink to Mike. "It's a very, very powerful tool for research and experimentation."

The class was speechless.

Miss Wednesday smiled, it had the intended effect. "Ok, for tomorrow's class I'd like you get bring a wire coat hanger."

XXXXX

"I'm serious Jane, you've got the coolest mom I've ever seen, she's a good teacher, she doesn't take any shit from Troy. This was always one of my favourite classes. This and the next one English."

Jane looked down.

“What’s wrong?”

“My mom’s going to get into trouble if she keeps that up, but that’s not why I’m nervous. Even with my mom tu-tutoring me in English, I’m still not very good.”

“That’s ok, I can help you, just sit next to me ok?”

She smiled at him. “Ok”

While they were writing in class Mike took looked at Jane concentrating, she looked sideways at him and smiled and then continued with her work.

Mike felt weird. He was thinking that he was starting to like her. It seemed like every time he looked at her he thought she was maybe a little bit prettier than the last time he looked. At one point he got caught looking at her.

“Are you ok Mike. Am I doing this wrong?”

Mike took a look down at her work. “No, your spelling is perfect. It’s better than mine, it’s almost like you’ve read and memorized a dictionary.”

“Close.” She said, gave him a shy smile and went back to work

He couldn’t tell if she was serious or not. He didn’t care. He liked talking to her, just hearing her voice, looking at her smile... looking into those eyes. He loved the way she looked at him.

He wondered what she would say if he asked her to go to the Hawk with him. He didn’t care what movie was playing. He like sitting next to her.

“Um, Jane? Um, I know the rest of the Party is busy this weekend. Not sure why, but do you want to hang out? Maybe go to a movie or something.”

She looked up, but not at him. Thinking about it, tapping the end of her pencil against her chin.

“A movie?”

“Sure, I’ll pay and everything.” He had no idea how he was going to swing that, he didn’t even have enough money to pay for himself, let alone another person and popcorn.

She gave him a big smile. “It’s a date!”

XXXXX

“Um. mom?”

“What is it Michael?”

“Can I borrow money for a movie this weekend?”

“Borrow? How would you pay it back?”

“Mowing lawns I guess...” Mike was suddenly interested in the way he’d tied his shoelaces.

“Ok, how much do you need.”

When he gave her a number she said, “That’s kind of high isn’t it? Are you sure you’re going to a movie and not just the arcade?”

Mike sighed, “I wanted to take a friend from school, she’s new to Hawkins and to the school, I thought I’d show her around and take her to a movie.”

“Her?”

The colour of red that Mike’s face was turning could have been made into a new intense colour crayon.

“Sure Michael, it’s very nice you’re doing that for her. And because your heart is in the right place, you don’t have to pay me back.”

Mike smiled, "Really? Thanks mom, you're really cool." He turned and ran down to the basement.

Karen Wheeler smiled dabbed an eye and thought, that girl is never going to realize what a prize she's getting with Mike. Maybe it's time he gets an allowance so he doesn't have to keep asking me.

"He said I was cool." Karen realized that maybe she needed to lighten up a bit on him. He was a good kid, she was doing a good job of raising him.

If his heart got broken, it wouldn't be because he was a typical boy being a jerk.

3. Field Trip

“Did everybody bring their coat hangers?” Miss Wednesday asked.

The whole class held theirs up. Troy held up a wooden coat hanger. Mike was able to sneak a quick look at Jane, she noticed and smiled at him before looking back to the teacher

“Mr. Walsh, that coat hanger won’t work.”

Troy mumbled, “It would still hang up your panties... if you were wearing any.” But she heard him anyway.

“It’s Friday Mr. Walsh, enjoy your day off.”

Again Troy just sat there, “I was told to bring a coat hanger, don’t be a twat.”

“If you think you can bend that wooden coat hanger into a rough circle, go right ahead. I’m sure whoever gave you the coat hanger information will give you the rules for the field trip. But you won’t get them in my class. Get out.”

Troy didn’t move.

“Sorry let me be clear. This twat said get the fuck out of my class.”

“Ooooooh.” Went through the classroom and Troy got up and left. Mike wasn’t really paying attention to the Troy scene, he was looking at Jane. She noticed again gave him a half smile, almost a frown... Mike didn’t know what, but it worried him a little bit.

“He’s not a quick learner is he?” She sighed.

The class laughed. Mike wondered how Troy liked being bullied by someone he could do nothing about. Mike didn’t feel sorry for him at all. He didn’t care how bad a home life he had. He didn’t have to bring his anger to school.

Everyone already had their coat hangers reshaped to a circle.

“Ok, each group has a coat hanger and a notebook to record results. You will throw it in a random direction one hundred times. Each partner has a chance to throw and record. Fifty-fifty.”

Jane caught Mike staring at her again. She nonchalantly ripped off a corner of a page in her notebook, wrote on it and passed it to Mike.

STOP STARING AT ME

Mike’s weakness for her pretty eyes and gotten the better of him. He put his head down and said, “sorry.” She didn’t respond.

“Ok, let’s meet out in the big field in fifteen minutes.”

Mike had to force himself not to look at Jane. She didn’t seem to care.

What Mike thought would be a fun field trip talking to her turned out to be painful, and tedious, throwing, counting plants, writing the information down. Fifty times for him and fifty times for Jane. They were actually finished first because they didn’t talk, or look at each other. They were efficient doing the assignment.

The teacher raised her eyebrows when they turned in their results early. She took a quick look at the notebook, then back and forth at the two of them frowning slightly. “Ok good job, you two are done for the day. We’ll figure out the stats on Monday in class and discuss. Oh, if you can bring in a tape measure for Monday. We can go to the next phase”

Mike nodded, turned and walked back to school to get his bike. Completely deflated. Where the hell was he going to get a tape measure.

Why would she like me anyway? I don’t have anything to offer a girl. I’m not athletic, I’m a nerd I’m the school’s frogface. Smart is definitely not on the radar. I definitely don’t want to get caught staring at her again. That

sucks... she's really pretty.

XXXXX

Over the next three days Mike didn't look at Jane, and barely talked to her outside of the class project. That math was fun to work on, Jane had a bit of trouble with it, but Mike was able to walk her through the process.

When they were done for the day, Mike gathered his books and was about to head to the locker when Miss Wednesday asked to speak to him on the way out.

"Are you ok Mike?"

"Yes, Miss Wednesday. Is there a problem?"

"Are you and El having a fight?"

"Um, I don't know who El is?" Mike shrugged.

"Sorry, It's a nickname Jim and I came up with for Jane."

"No we aren't fighting. She..." Mike sighed. "She probably told you already, so I might as well... she caught me staring at her."

"Staring at what? Exactly?" Miss Wednesday did not look pleased.

Mike hung his head, "At her eyes... that's all Miss Wednesday. She told me, well, gave me a note to stop and I said sorry. We haven't really talked since then. And I haven't stared at her at all since then."

"I don't want to embarrass you Mike... are you saying you like my daughter?"

Mike nodded, turning a crimson.

Where's a deep hole I can crawl into quickly. This is the worst day of my

life.

“You should tell her, Mike.”

XXXXX

El heard a knock on the door, she quickly wiped her eyes and said,
“Come in.”

“You ok, honey?”

El shrugged.

“I talked to Mike today after class?”

“What?!”

“I wanted to know if you two were having a fight. As a teacher, I need to resolve any student conflicts... and as your mother... I just want you to be happy.”

El burst into tears.

“Honey what is it?” She came over, sat on the bed and gathered El in a hug.

“Mike hates me.”

“Why do you say that?”

“He hasn’t talked to me in three days other than for school, and he doesn’t look at me at all. It’s like I’m not even there.”

“I don’t think Mike hates you at all... as a matter of fact, I think he kind of likes you.”

“How do you know?”

“El, honey... why do you think he was staring at you?”

“Staring at me? Who said that?”

“You did. When you told him to stop.”

“Oh that. I thought it was flat... flattering, but then I thought it was just creepy.”

“Do you know why boys do that?”

“No. Tell me, I can’t wait to hear this.” El said sniffing a little.

“Boys stare at you when they like you and think you are pretty.”

El said nothing for a second. “Really? He thinks I’m pretty?” She ran a hand over her short hair.

“Why?”

“Honey, if you are asking me what goes on in a boy’s head, you aren’t going to get any answers you like. But if *you* figure it out. Let me know, cause I could use those answers with your dad.”

El giggled.

“I’ll give you a hint though. It’s your eyes.”

“What’s so special about my eyes?”

“Well some guy told me, well, he didn’t exactly tell me. But he said he was staring at your eyes. I’m guessing it’s because he thinks they’re pretty.”

El thought for a second. “Wait... are you saying Mike said that?”

“Maybe.” Her mother looked off into the air.

XXXXXX

“Um, Mom? We don’t have a tape measure.” El said.

“We can go to Melvald’s and pick one up.”

On the drive their her mom asked, “You’ve been quiet today. Thinking about Mike?”

“Mo-om.”

They got to Melvald’s and walked in. El saw Mike right away down one of the aisles. She turned to her mom in panic, but she was nowhere to be found.

“Hi Mike.” Mike didn’t look at her. He must have recognized her voice.

“What are you doing here?”

“Getting a tape measure for Monday, like your mom asked.”

“Ok. I won’t get one then... Mike?”

“Yeah Jane?”

“Why won’t you look at me?”

Mike didn’t say anything for a few seconds. “You told me not to. I have it in writing.”

“I wrote *stop staring at me*. You can look at me Mike.”

Mike’s head hung even lower.

“You aren’t even going to look at me?”

“I can’t.” Mike’s voice was low, like he didn’t want anyone to hear him.

“You find me that ugly with my hair you can’t even look at me.”

"No." He said quietly. "The exact opposite."

"Oh?"

He gave a huge sigh. "Ok. I'm just going to come out and say it. I think your hair is cute, but you have the prettiest eyes I've..." He didn't finish that sentence but said, "You're really pretty Jane." He looked into her eyes when he said that.

El didn't know what to say. Nobody, not even her parents had told her that anything about her was pretty... and his eyes were beautiful. They were so gentle and caring that El thought she might cry on the spot.

"If you are staring at me because I'm pretty... well, how can a girl say no to that. No girl would. Especially not one that looks like me."

"I didn't mean to creep you out. I'm a nerd. I don't know how to deal with girls. At all."

"I'll make it easy for you Mike. Friends?"

"Friends. I don't want you to hate me."

El giggled. "I told my mom last night I thought you hated me."

He looked shocked. "No... no I could never hate you."

"There you are. Oh, Mike. We didn't expect to see you here."

"Hi Miss Wednesday. I think Jane and I are ready for Monday."

"Good. Um, El... Jane I need to run an errand. Can you hang out with Mike for a few hours? If you want to go to a movie...", she dug into her purse. "Here, my treat." She handed the money to Mike. "I think *Legend* is still playing at the Hawk."

Mike looked at her. "You want to go? I've seen it. Great music, and I think you'll find Tom Cruise... uh dreamy... do girls still say that?"

El's mom laughed. "Ok, I'll leave you to it. Pick you up after the movie?"

Both Mike and El nodded.

“This is my first date.” El said.

“Mine too... um, and I guess I’m paying... with popcorn.”

“Such a gentlemen.” El said she tried to use her prettiest smile.

4. The Dance

Mike found his way back to their seats in the theatre. He passed the large drink to Jane, she put it in the cup holder and then the large bag of popcorn. Mike settled into his seat.

“Jane, your mom forced us to share, so I bought the biggest bag of popcorn, and the largest drink. Two straws.” Mike whispered.

“You didn’t want my girl cooties?”

“Uh...”

“I’m kidding Mike. Can you... can you call me *El*?”

“You don’t like Jane?”

El looked down, “Not really.”

“El it is.” Mike took out one of the straws and dropped it on the floor. “Give me *all* your girl cooties, El.”

She giggled. “There are better ways of giving you my cooties than using the same straw.”

“Um...,” Mike could only think of one way, but there was no chance in hell he’d bring up kissing. The thought of it though, made him feel warm and fuzzy. Kissing Ja- no, El Hopper... he was sure his knees would be all wobbly once he looked into her eyes.

“Mike... it’s ok. I promise... sort of... not to kiss you and give you cooties.”

Sort of? Mike had butterflies.

XXXXX

Mike heard sniffing. He turned to El, "Are you ok?" He saw tears running down her cheek. Her hands were clasped to her chest.

"The music she is dancing to is beautiful."

"It's called *The Dance* . I think it's very moving. I thought I was the only one who felt that. "

El gave him a smile as she wiped her eyes. It was the kind of smile that he couldn't quite figure out but it felt good to see it. She leaned against him and put her head on his shoulder. "Thanks for taking me to this. That music was worth it. That devil guy is scary though."

"The Dark Lord, yeah, that's great make-up they have on the actor."

Before the end of the movie, they were holding hands. El was sleeping on his shoulder, and Mike didn't dare move a muscle.

XXXXX

As the credits rolled, Mike smelled perfume and heard a whisper. "Gently wake her up Mike. It's time to go."

"Sorry Miss Wednesday, she fell asleep as soon as the credits started. I always stay for credits."

"I hate to wake her up, she looks so peaceful."

"...and pretty." It was still a whisper but he blurted it out. He didn't catch Miss Wednesday's smile.

"Is it over?" El said, rubbing her eyes. "I'm sorry Mike, I didn't mean to fall asleep on you."

"That's ok El. Your mom's here, time for us to get going."

XXXXX

Mike sat in the back seat and Miss Wednesday started up the car. "Mike, El is having a bit of trouble with the math part of the assignment. Is it possible for you two to do your homework at our place tonight?"

El looked wide-eyed.

"Um, I'd have to check in with my mom, I don't think it will be a problem."

"I've got you covered, I ran into your Mom this afternoon, we'll drop by and get your books. You can have dinner at our place. Maybe we'll make it a fun night and get pizza? Sound good?"

Mike smiled, "Sure, Miss Wednesday"

"So... how was the movie?" She asked Mike and El.

"It's a basic movie about good versus evil. Good always triumphs, but evil can be very scary." Mike explained.

"You are so right. What about you El? Did you want to kiss Tom Cruise through the whole movie?"

"Not exactly. But I *did* want to kiss all through the movie." She said in a lower voice she knew Mike wouldn't be able to hear." She kept her little smile from her mother and Mike.

While El's mom was in the pizza place, Mike said, "I can't believe how cool your mom is."

"You've said. I'm beginning to think you like my mom more than..." El stopped talking.

Mike continued on, "Mr. Clarke was always my favourite teacher, and

having a cool teacher substitute is almost unheard of. I don't want to make your mom mad at me."

"You don't want to see my mom angry."

"Scarier than the Dark Lord?"

"Much."

XXXXX

"You two go into El's room, work on your homework, take some pizza with you." Miss Wednesday said.

"Keep the door open three inches." Hopper said.

"No." Miss Wednesday's voice was firm.

"Did you just say *no*?"

"I did. Don't fight me on this one Jim. You will lose."

"But..."

"You're thinking like a Dad. I love you for that, but you need to think like El."

"But Mike might try something."

"No chance. First off, that's Mike Wheeler we're talking but. I'll be happy if El can convince Mike to kiss her. He's not you Jim. Total opposite."

"You cured me of that Wendy. So did El. I'm not that person anymore."

"Trust me. Ok? You want to see El happier than she's ever been?"

Trust me.”

XXXXX

“This kind of math is called *statistics*. Most people know what an average is, but there’s a lot more to it. You saw what it could do with the demonstration your mom did with the coloured marbles.”

“Mom knows all kinds of stuff like that.”

There was a sudden crack of thunder and El cringed. She crawled up towards the headboard of the bed and hugged her knees.

“It’s ok El. We’re just getting a storm. That sounded close.”

“I don’t like storms.”

There was a knock on the bedroom door. “You ok in there?” It was Hopper.

“We’re ok, Dad.”

Another crack. In a low timid voice, El said, “Hold me... Mike.”

He got up beside her, and put his arms around her. She was shivering. He pulled up one of the blankets to cover them both. The sound of the wind picked up, it made the pounding rain sound even worse.

There was another knock on the door. It was Miss Wednesday. “Stay where you are Mike. You aren’t going anywhere tonight. I’ve already cleared it with your mother.”

“I guess I’ll sleep on the floor.” Mike said.

“You don’t have to Mike. I promise not to try anything if we sleep in

the same bed.” El gave a little giggle. “I... I want a warm body next to me.”

“Your dad is gonna freak out if he sees us.”

“My mother is a force of nature. Don’t worry about my dad.”

“Uh, El, your dad is Chief Jim Hopper. I’m not sure you want to piss him off.”

“My mom is Wendy Wednesday. That’s right, with that name you *don’t* piss her off.”

XXXXXX

Wendy brought a cast iron pan out to the sofa and sat with her husband. She licked her lips, and then kissed the center of the pan. She gave it to Hopper. “What do you see?”

He looked at the pan. Mike and El were laying on the bed. He saw El with her legs wrapped around Mike’s waist. She had him in a tight hug. Her chin resting his shoulder.

“What the...”

“Look at her face, Jim.”

“She’s smiling.”

“She’s not just smiling Jim. That’s a blissful smile, she feels safe. She’s warm. Have you *ever* seen her like that when the weather has been this bad? You know how she hates storms and being cold. That’s the smile of a girl who has forgotten all of that.”

“You don’t mean Mike?”

"Of course I do. That is the boy she loves. And Jim.... they are going to be together forever.

"You don't know that."

"Jim, seriously this is me we are talking about. Of *course* I know that."

"But..."

"Get used to it. In a few years, they are going to have sex. Get used to that too. Tonight they will be sleeping in the same bed. Safe and warm. They haven't even kissed yet. I expect that will happen before they actually fall asleep."

"If he tries anything..."

"He won't. You should be more worried about our daughter trying something."

"Wha..."

"Jim. She. *Loves* . Him. She will do anything for him. Isn't that the point? We want her to have something she will fight for, would even die for if necessary. I don't think that's going to happen, but the bond needs to be there. We knew it would probably be a boyfriend."

"I hate this shit."

"And I don't? I've been living with it a lot longer than you have."

"How come there's nothing in the library about this *Day of Woden* crap?"

"There is. They don't call it that though."

"Ok, what *do* they call it?"

"Ragnorok."

XXXXX

A knock on the door. "If you two are done your homework, you can stay up and talk for a bit, but make sure you get some sleep."

Mike lay his head on a pillow facing her, his face was inches from hers. "El, can I ask you a question? I don't want to make you mad."

"Go ahead Mike."

"How come you don't grow your hair longer?"

El closed her eyes. When she opened them and looked at him, he saw big, clear brown eyes that made his heart wince. "I can't Mike. I'll explain it some day, but not tonight. Are you ok with that?"

Mike couldn't tear his eyes away from hers. "Mike... I... want to kiss you."

Mike let out a relieved sigh. He closed the distance between them and gave her a soft, gentle kiss.

"You're my first kiss." They both said at the same time.

Mike half smiled at her. "Does this mean you are my girlfriend now?"

"I want to be Mike."

"Me too." They kissed for a lot longer.

"Your dad would so freak out if he saw us now."

"My mom probably already told him."

"How would she know?"

"Believe me Mike. She knows."

Mike kissed her again. "I can't wait to hold your hand in school."

El moved closer and they hugged for warmth under the blankets. The smile never left her face.

They fell asleep that way until daylight the next morning.

5. Love

El began kissing Mike, she parted her lips making the kiss more sensuous.

“Um... El.”

“You don’t want me to feel me out?”

“Uh... it’s *up* ... um... El... I’ve never had a girlfriend. It’s not like I don’t know what to do, but I don’t know what girls... um want me to do... I know what guys think girls want... but that’s not the same thing... ”

“Mike... whatever we do... we both agree to, ok? I trust you.”

“Girls mature faster than guys. We learned that in Sex Ed. Um... I don’t know what to say El. This is all new to me.”

Mike’s face heated up more than he thought possible. “Just a little nervous with your parents in the next room/“

El giggled. “It’s ok Mike. I can’t believe I just asked you that. Max told me to say that if I felt this way. I don’t want you to feel like we can’t be together because I’m hor-horny.”

Mike’s face was on fire.

“I’ll control myself Mike. I’m only saying all of this because... because....”

Mike said it for her. “I love you El. I want to be with you for as long as we have on this earth.”

El started to cry and Mike held the back of her head and pulled her to his chest and said “Does that mean... you love me...?” Mike was terrified of what the answer might be.

“It does.. That’s what I’ve been feeling, and I can’t even explain it. I have never felt this way before...”

There was a knock on the door. "El, Mike... we need to talk."

"Come in mom."

Wendy entered. "Ok, this is in no way meant to embarrass the both of you, but I know it will."

Here it comes. Thought Mike.

"You would make both sets of parents happy if they knew -they will never say- but if they knew you limited yourself to the following..."

Mike and El's face turned purple. Dark, dark purple.

"Sorry you two. It had to be said. But in the end, we'll all be happier. Agreed?"

"*All of that?*" El was wide eyed.

"Yes, El." Her mother said. "I'm comfortable with that. Your dad isn't but that's ok. Mike, you ok with *all of that*?"

Mike wouldn't meet her eyes.

"Is that enough?" Miss Wednesday said.

"I can't even look at you right now mom." El said, still very red faced. Mike nodded, his face was a little less purple now.

"You two are in love. You will want to explore both the mental and physical side of that love. Don't worry about your dad."

El started to cry again. "Thank you." Mike brought her into a tight hug.

"I promise you. You, and El. Soulmates are never apart. Ever. And they never hurt each other."

"Ok. You get it Mike. I'm so proud you are my daughter's boyfriend."

"I won't let you down Miss Wednesday. Or the chief. Or El. Especially not El."

Wendy brought her hand to her mouth. "Thank you Mike."

XXXXX

"I thought I was going to die of embarrassment." El said.

"It's like she could read our minds" El looked away. "I think we just got a real version of The Talk. Your mom doesn't pull any punches. We don't..." Mike looked away... "have to do any of that... that was a lot to take in."

"My mom trusts you... and so do I. We take that part slow... if we can." El gave Mike a crooked smile.

"Mike... what's a soulmate? Am I yours?"

Mike gave her a kiss. "I'd like to think so. A soulmate is someone very special in your life, someone you love. . someone you want to be with all the time. You can be yourself around them and when you are happy or sad, they are right there with you. Right by your side. There's probably an official dictionary definition... but that's how I feel."

"Then you are mine too, Mike. I love you so much my heart hurts. I think my mom might have known that before we even met."

"She seems kind of witchy... especially with that hair... uh, sorry El." Mike watched as she ran her hand over her buzzed hair.

"It's ok. You love me the way I look right now. That's all a girl can ask."

"When I look into your eyes El... I... I see my soulmate, the girl I want to be with forever." Mike sighed. " You are definitely my soulmate El. Your mom knows it too."

XXXXXX

Wendy licked her lips and kissed the center of the pan. "Look at this Jim." The storm was louder than either of them had experienced in Hawkins before. The wind and thunder shook the cabin constantly.

"Do I want to see it?"

"No, but look anyway. It's cute."

Jim looked at the pan, he saw Mike spooning El under the covers. His arm wrapped protectively around her waist. The peaceful look on El's face, in this storm... pinched his heart.

"They are too young for love that deep." He complained.

"No. No they aren't Jim. You are going to witness the strongest love you've ever seen." Wendy frowned.

"Stronger than ours?"

She nodded. "Much stronger. I love you Jim, but even I'm having a hard time getting to grips with how deep their love is. It's what's going to save us all."

"It's going to be that bad?"

"Yes. The world won't have seen anything like this."

"How can one little girl have that much power?"

"She won't be alone. I pity the... whatever, that tries to harm Mike. I'm not without resources. She won't be alone."

"Shit." He shook his head.

"Piles of it."

XXXXXX

Mike kissed the back of El's neck. She spun in place to face him. Careful to make sure that Mike's arm was still around her waist. "Kiss me."

Mike complied, lingering until they both parted their lips, deepening the kiss a little.

"I love your kisses." El said smiling shyly when they parted.

"How are you feeling? That was a really bad storm last night."

"I didn't notice Mike. I could feel your breathing behind me. I was safe."

"I don't know if I'm going to be able to face your dad this morning. Your mom either for that matter."

"I'm sure my dad feels the same way, he probably left early. I think mom's making us Eggos. Anyways she knows."

"Really? Hmm. Let's go say *good morning*."

XXXXXX

"That was a bad storm guys, wasn't it?" El's mom asked. "Are you ok El?"

"Mike protected me."

Wendy's inward smile almost made it to her face. "Ok, well, there won't be any reason for Mike to be here tonight so..."

El was immediately wide-eyed and looking panicked. She reached for Mike... "No...." she said in a small voice.

Wendy realized right away, and with that came the fear that they couldn't be without each other. Now that El had found her soulmate, splitting them up for any length of time was going to be difficult, maybe impossible for her to deal with. She thought furiously, she had an idea but it was a bit of a gamble. She would try anyway.

"I have an idea. I'm going to drop you off so that you two can walk to school, I have some errands to run before I teach my first class."

Mike and El looked at each other. They knew they'd be holding hands walking to school, and likely most of the day.

XXXXX

There was a knock on the door, Karen Wheeler got up from the kitchen table to answer. She saw a stunning auburn haired woman standing in front of her. "Can I help you?"

"Mrs. Wheeler? I'm Wendy, Mike's teacher. We spoke last night."

"Wendy! Come on in, do you want some coffee?"

"Please."

"Is Mike ok? Everything ok at school?"

"He's fine, very smart young boy you have there."

Karen smiled. "I'm glad you kept him last night. I didn't know if you had a spare bedroom or not."

"We don't."

"Mike would have been ok with the sofa."

"He slept in El's bed." Wendy said, not taking her eyes from Karen's.

Karen looked puzzled. "I'm not sure that was such a good idea."

"Jim didn't think so either." Wendy sighed. "I need to tell you something."

"Jane, my daughter, we call her El for a nickname, long partly related story, but, Jim rescued her from a bad lab, that is home situation..."

"Oh that poor dear."

"She has night terrors. Every night, and storms make it even worse, if that was possible."

Karen smiled. "She didn't have them last night did she?"

"No, and it was because of your son. Mike and El are, well, what you and I call it dating, I'm not sure what the kids call it these days, going out, hanging out, who knows. They are boyfriend and girlfriend. Thing is... last night El didn't have any night terrors, no nightmares... nothing. She actually slept with a smile on her face. She has *never* had a good night's sleep as long as she's been with us. So I'm asking you, as one mother to another... if they can be together... at night."

"But not in the same bed, right?"

"In the same bed."

"I'm not sure that's such a good idea."

"If it were any boy other than Mike, I would probably agree with you. But Mike treats my daughter like a princess. I've read them the Riot Act... I trust my daughter... Mrs. Wheeler--"

"Karen, call me Karen please."

"Karen, I trust my daughter, and I trust Mike with this... situation. The look on El's face this morning when I hinted that they would not be together tonight like last night... it was like she had just woken up from the night terrors. I don't mind telling you it's the worst thing to see on your child's face."

“I’ve seen it.” Karen said. “On Michael.”

“I know this is asking a lot for a parent. If their relationship doesn’t last, well then, I guess that’s the end of it. But Karen... you should see them together. It’s uncanny. As a teacher I’ve seen a lot of school relationships, but I’ve *never* seen one like this.”

“Bring them by after school today. This is... unusual.”

“It is.”

Karen saw the worried look in Wendy’s face. Wendy was letting her make the decision. Not only about the happiness of her daughter, but of Mike as well.

How could she say no?

6. Two Cool Moms

Mike and El put up their hands at almost the same time. Their other hands were clasped tightly.

Karen turned her head to Wendy, cocked an eyebrow.

“That’s right Karen, my students put up their hands and are acknowledged before they are allowed to speak. “

Wendy turned back to Mike, “Yes, Mike?”

“Um, El and I can’t help but feeling like we are in trouble. We are sitting across from two moms, we know it’s serious.”

“Yes it is Michael,” Karen said. “Wendy told me what you did for El the night of the storm.”

Mike nodded, “All I did was hold her while... ah... ok. I guess this would be the punishment meeting... sorry El.”

“No, you have it wrong. El’s mom told me that she has some sleeping issues, especially during a storm. El’s parents don’t get much sleep those nights either. But that night, you helped El, and in turn, her parents.”

El gave a quick nod and beamed a smile at him. He leaned over and gave her a quick kiss. Immediately blushed and said, “Sorry moms.”

Karen and Wendy gave each other knowing smiles. Neither Mike or El picked up on it.

“So,” Karen said, “You’ve been given rules, following those rules lets you sleep beside each other. Both of us are trusting you on this. For God’s sake don’t tell anyone. We don’t need the Principal or the

police knocking on our doors.”

El and Mike looked at each other, not quite believing what they were hearing.

“Mike’s bed is too small, do you have a plan, Mike?” Karen looked pointedly at her son.

“Specially designed blanket fort.”

“Specially designed by who?”

“Me. For El... and... me.”

XXXXX

“Um, El?”

Mike and El were walking down the railroad tracks holding hands, she looked over at him.

“Either we have the two coolest mom’s in the world. Or they are, I don’t know, trying to prepare us for some bad news. What do you think?”

“What if it’s a combination of both?”

“If I’m with you then I’ll do everything I possible can to protect you.”

“What if it’s the other way around Mike?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean what if it’s me that has to protect you?”

Mike stopped walking. "Um, ok." He suddenly sounded unsure of himself. "I'm not sure how you'd do that. I mean I guess your pretty eyes could, I don't know, protect against anything." Mike stopped when El started to laugh.

"You really like my eyes don't you?" El regretted saying it right away when Mike looked down.

"Yeah, El. I really do. They are pretty, of course, but they are honest, and the way you look at me... kinda makes my knees weak."

"Mike, let's go over in the grass. I will take my pants off and we can screw right away."

Mike's head snapped up, he looked a little panicked. . "That wasn't on the list El."

El laughed again. "I just said that to let you know that I'm yours Mike. Nobody has complimented me more than you have. I won't play with your feelings. I don't care what Mom's list was. I love her and respect her wishes... but... this is so different... I hope you feel it too?"

"Believe me El. I think I might respect your mom's wishes more than you do. I..." The expression on Mike's face was... El couldn't describe it... he wanted her to know he was very serious... "I want to be with you forever El. I'm sure your mom knows that, and I think my mom knows it too... I just wanted you to know..."

"I know Mike."

They closed in for a kiss. A simple kiss, lips just slightly parted, but they held it for a long time.

XXXXXX

“First El. I’m totally embarrassed to ask you this question.”

“Mrs. Wheeler it’s ok. I sleep in pajamas. Both Mike and I do. He spoons me Mrs. Wheeler. He doesn’t try to feel me up, he kind of kisses the back of my neck and tells me he loves me. But that’s it.”

“I feel like shit asking you that.”

“Can I talk to you privately Mrs. Wheeler. Some girl talk?”

“Of course honey.”

XXXXXX

Mike had zipped together two single sleeping bags. He was in one already. El turned out the light and made her way to the blanket fort, facing Mike. “That was a little awkward.”

“Girl stuff?”

“Woman stuff, Mike.”

“Ok, I’ll leave it at that. Is... um... mom ok with the arrangement?”

“She is. She said if we were going to make out... where... something happened. To keep the noise down.”

“We’d just be kissing, El... uh... oh... we wouldn’t be breaking your mom’s rules. We agreed to that.”

“My mom knows I’m going to break those rules.”

“What?!”

“Not tonight Mike. Maybe not right away. But... I love you. I want to be with you. In every way possible.”

“I think we should wait a few minutes before... um... I... um... spoon you.”

“No. It means you love me Mike. I won’t let you break the rules... I’m going to turn over. Try not to dry hump me too much, ok?”

Mike didn’t answer but El could feel the heat from his face. He was silent. But he spooned her. El didn’t feel him, she figured his embarrassment melted his amorous physical state away.

XXXXX

“I’m sorry about the dry hump comment Mike.” Silence.

After a moment or so, Mike said, “I wouldn’t have done that El.”

“Mike you are so polite with me, it’s ok to say I turn you on... if I do... because you make *me* tingly.”

“Yeah, you do El. I will tell you something I don’t think I’d tell either of our moms... uh... maybe not...”

El could guess. “That list was interesting wasn’t it?”

“I thought I would die of embarrassment when I read what your mom wrote.”

“She believes in telling it like it is. I’ve kind of gotten used to it. Now you have to. What do you want to try?”

El could feel extreme heat from Mike’s face on the back of her neck. He was very careful to keep his breathing in check. He didn’t say anything for several minutes. “Mike, I’m your girlfriend, and I love you...”

Mike told her.

XXXXX

“Mike you can’t be embarrassed about that. It’s perfectly natural, I appreciated that you wanted to make sure I was... satisfied first... Mike... there’s a reason it didn’t take me long.”

“Well, longer than the five seconds it took me.”

“Maybe, but that tension is out of the way Mike. The love is still there... right?...”

“The love is even stronger El, I hope you didn’t think it wouldn’t be. Your mom said we would be exploring the physical part of our love. It’s like she knew.”

“My mom knows how people, even people our age think. That’s why she’s a good teacher... and an even greater mom.”

Mike tightened his arm around El’s waist. “I love it when you hold me like this Mike.”

“I just want to protect you...”

“Mmm, you protect my heart.”

XXXXX

“How was your first night together?” Karen asked her son and his girlfriend.

“We had dirty sex all night long Mrs. Wheeler.” El said.

Karen froze for a moment, almost burning the pancakes. “Ok, I guess I deserved that.”

“Mike held me all night long. No night terrors. I’ve now had two nights of sleep in a row straight through. All because of Mike... and the way we feel about each other. Please don’t forget that Mrs. Wheeler. I love Mike. We love each other.”

Karen couldn’t turn around. She didn’t want either of them seeing the tear that had escaped. She cleared her throat, “I have a thousand pancakes.”

“I can only eat a hundred or so,” El said, “Sorry Mrs. Wheeler, I’m hungry but they aren’t Eggos.”

“She really likes Eggos,” Mike said.

XXXXXX

They were walking down the railroad tracks, it was becoming one of their favourite walks. When then reached the junkyard, they’d start walking back.

“Mike I had to grow up kind of fast. My Mom tells me I need to grow up even faster. That I have some important work to do. She told me that one of the fringe benefits was going to be that list. I hope you weren’t ashamed of what we did.”

“It was great... I wasn’t expecting... you know...” Mike was entering another purple phase.

"It's nothing I wouldn't have done with my own fingers Mike. It's very special when someone you love does it for you. Like I did for you... you enjoyed that...?"

Mike's purple phase entered another shade, but he nodded.

"And you weren't grossed out by the cleanup? Mike? Please don't turn any more purple, I don't want you to explode."

"You didn't have to clean me up that way, El."

"No, but it was fun wasn't it? Next time we are going to skip that middle step."

"Middle step?"

"Using our hands."

"Uh, you mean...?"

"Yes Mike. The next thing on the list. For both of us."

"You... um... you don't think we are too young for that?" Mike asked.

"Probably... but I don't care, it will keep our hormones in check. It'll be nice after a bad day to come home to your boyfriend, *knowing* he's going to do that for you, to make you feel incredible And that you will repay him in kind." El winked at him.

They were at the junkyard. Troy and James were there.

"Shit, I think they saw us."

7. Mouthbreather Be Gone

“Oh, this is perfect.” Troy said to James, they were both threateningly close to Mike and El.

“You see what we have here James? The perfect situation. You hold down Mike. He gets to watch me fuck his girlfriend. I think I might do all three of her holes.

El looked at him, she grabbed Mike’s hand, leaned in and whispered to him. “Whatever happens, do *not* let go of my hand. Promise!.”

Mike whispered back. “I promise, El.”

He was about to say something else when El said, “You are assuming, mouth reather, that I can’t do anything about it..”

Troy rolled his eyes. “Yup, bitch, that’s what I’m assuming.”

“So you are going to sexually assault me... right? I think that’s called rape.”

“I like to think of it as deflowering a bitch and making her my whore, end result, you become a woman. It’s not all bad.”

XXXXXX

“Where did Troy go?” Mike asked looking around.

“Who’s Troy?” James said.

“Nobody.” El said nonchalantly. James shrugged and walked away.

As soon as James was out of earshot, El started sobbing.

“El? What’s wrong, did Troy hurt you?” Mike was looking around to see if he could run after the bastard.

“Th-there is n-no T-T-Troy.” El said blubbering through her words.

Mike hugged her and waited till she could talk.

“I don’t want you to hate me Mike.”

“Impossible El. Totally impossible.”

“You haven’t heard what I’m going to say Mike. It’s... not good. I’m going to have to explain this to my mom too, better if I only have to say this once.”

“Um, El? Um, you’re scaring me a little.” Mike gave her a little smile, but El lowered her head, the tears were so heavy they didn’t run down her cheeks, they just dropped straight from her eyes. He could hear their light patter on the sand at her feet.

“I don’t care what it is El.

XXXXX

They walked all the way to the cabin. El was silent the entire way. They would stop to kiss every now and then, but Mike could tell that she really wasn’t into it. She had something to say and until then their relationship seemed to have slipped into a grey area, on hold even.

XXXXX

As soon as El saw her mother she burst into tears. “I know honey. You had to do what you did. Was Mike holding your hand?”

El nodded, the tears hadn’t slowed after her mom’s hug. Wendy looked at Mike, an eyebrow raised.

“You remember that mouthbreather Troy you kicked out of your class a few times... wel he threatened to assault El... I would done everything to stop it but... then he was gone.

Wendy smiled. “I don’t know who Troy is. But I *did* feel the disturbance. El... you can go to your room, have a hot bath, I’ll explain to Mike.”

El nodded and turned to Mike, raised her arms around his neck, and pulled him in for a lingering kiss. Wendy could see the relief on his face. He thought they were over. He was just learning how much love El had to give... and that nothing was going to stop her from giving...

“Um... Miss Wednesday... I’ll be the first to admit I’m a little confused. You are the second person today that doesn’t know who Troy is.”

“Mike, it’s because he no longer exists. No... I see your look. He wasn’t killed. He just never existed...”

“Um... Miss Wednesday...”

“El is what’s best described as a Forsvinner. Norwegian. She can make things disappear... but not just from your sight. From reality. From *everyone’s* reality. It is a very powerful gift. You already know she hates to use it. Only for defense. That’s what Jim and I taught her. Only those who she touches will know what used to be. If you

are to be with her Mike. You must always hold hands with her.”

“That’s not a problem Miss Wednesday. What if she got mad and made *me* disappear?”

“Very astute. Now you know why she’s scared to use her power. Only your love will prevent that Mike.”

Mike lowered her hand. “I don’t want to lose her.”

Wendy smiled. “I don’t think that will ever happen. Mike... I’ve been around a long time. I have *never* seen a love that strong... Never... it scares me.”

“It’s just love Miss Wednesday. Nothing to be scared of.”

She hugged him. Mike thought she would crush him. He felt a little out of breath. “I have to ask... “ he said.

“I’m a Redd Heksen. I have the power to save people. I’ve been around for eons. I don’t even know the limit of my power. If I can save someone... I have the ability.”

Mike nodded. “You and El would make a very powerful team.”

Wendy nodded. “But. El is powered by love. The stronger the more powerful. Do you what the moon is?”

“Planet moons. Yeah. Saturn and Jupiter have the most.”

“Mike. The earth had a moon. A big one. Too big for it’s orbit and completely out of place, but conspiracy theories aside. It’s gone.”

“Earth as in our planet? Um, Miss Wednesday, I think you may need to look at a grade seven astronomy book or too. No earth moon.”

“Who’s Troy?”

Mike thought for a brief second. “Oh shit. Obviously... it needed to be done?”

“Yes Mike. She is very powerful. But she needs love, understanding...

and guidance. Lots of all three.”

Mike nodded.

“I love her too much to say no.”

XXXXX

“Do you hate me?”

They lay in bed facing each other. “No El. Never. I’ve read a lot of science-fiction and fantasy, but I never thought...”

“But you still love me right?”

“Look at me El.”

They looked into each other’s eyes. She nodded.

“How about we forget all this for an afternoon. We’ll go to the mall. Shop. I’ll buy you something, We’ll get some really greasy bad food in the food court.”

“You don’t hate me. Right now that’s all I can ask.”

“Not really El. You can ask me anything. If it’s in my power I’ll do it.”

“Mike. I know my mom gave you money. I know she likes you. I know she loves that you love me. But you can’t ask her for money every time.”

“I have money El.” Mike reached over to the night stand and grabbed his wallet. He looked into it. “Ok, that’s more than I expected.”

“My mom again.”

“Not this time El. I checked it right after I took it out of my pocket tonight. I had fifteen dollars. Enough for, you know, a small gift and lunch. Before you ask. Your mom did *not* have her hand in my pants.”

El giggled.

“It’s not like I made it appear out of thin air. I wish I *had* that power... but nope.”

XXXXXX

“Oh, shit.” Wendy said.

She and Jim had just made love. She grabbed her pan to spy on her daughter and her boyfriend.

Jim sighed. “Ok. Out with it.”

“Mike is a Látasjásiger.”

“Ok. What is that in American.”

She looked at him. The anger started to brew. “When are the citizens of your country going to figure out that they were an afterthought of exploration? You are all descendants of settlers. You had to kill the indigenous people of this land to do it. You are not the end all be all of human civilisation. My people were here hundreds of years before yours. Mike’s people... well they were never interested. The peace of the climate and mountains were enough for them. Did you know that capitalism will ultimately fail. Russian culture. Chinese culture,

Indian culture. It's all longer lived than American culture and greed. And it stuck. How many stock market crashes have there been? How many shootings? How much genocide had to happen before you had a cushy job?"

Jim was silent. "I may be a product of all that Wendy. But I'm not responsible."

Wendy sighed. "I know that Jim. You are one of the good guys. Look at your profession. You wanted to stop the bad guys. That's why I love you. Your love fuels me. Mike's love fuels our daughter."

"If the four of us would be alive after all you've said. I would continue to be a happy man."

"Hold on to that Jim."